

2014 Recreation and Conservation Funding Board Member Survey

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Survey Approach

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) staff requested feedback from Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) members through a survey distributed on December 9, 2014. The survey closed January 9, 2015 with nine total responses.¹

Board members had the opportunity to identify themselves in the ultimate survey question so that RCO's executive team could follow up individually with members. For the purposes of this summary, board member comments are included without names.

How These Data are Being Used

RCO management is reviewing these survey results for ways the agency can improve service to the RCFB. Staff will present these data to the board at its April meeting.

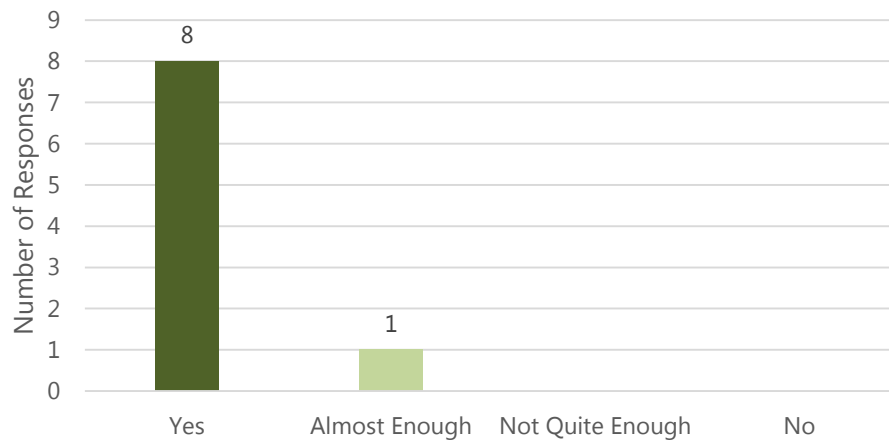
Action Items Gathered from the Survey

- Hold a board member retreat to discuss the board's role in policy making and other topics.
- Explore ways to better engage members in the ranking process, improve performance measures, and review conversion information.
- Develop ways to better link meeting topics to the board's strategic plan.
- Consider adding more time for board discussion and public comment in meeting agendas.

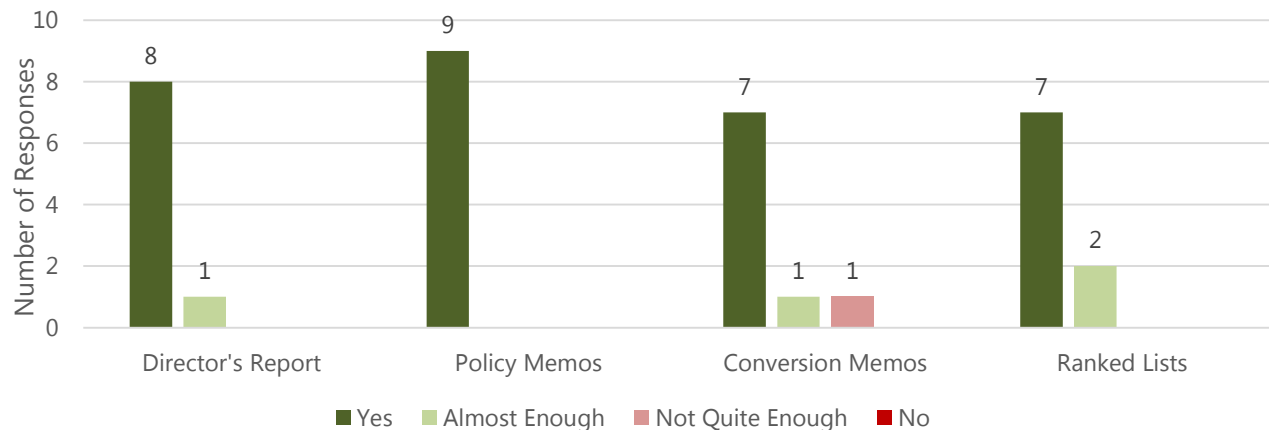
¹ Although the RCFB includes only eight members, a member and designee from the same state agency both responded to the survey. This brought the total number of respondents to nine.

Survey Results: Board Memos and Materials

Do you generally have enough time to review the materials before the meeting?



Do the memos/board materials provide you with sufficient background information to support decision making at the meeting?



Notes

- Eight out of nine board members feel they generally have enough time to review materials before the meeting. One member said he or she had "almost enough" time.
- Board members responded unanimously that memos and other materials are clearly written by RCO staff.
- The majority of board members felt that the memos and other materials provide sufficient background information to support decision-making.
- One to two board members responded they could use more information in the Director's report, conversion memos, and ranked lists.

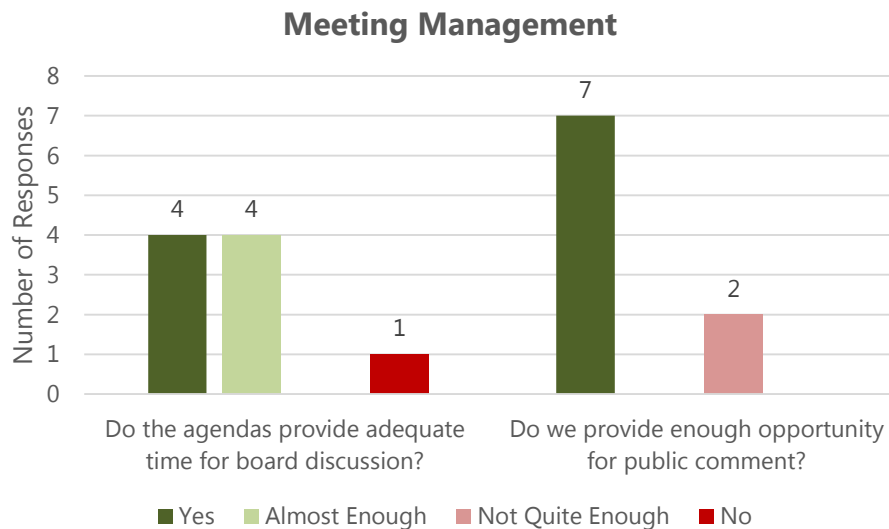
- All but one board member responded that they find the news clippings a useful tool. At the end of the survey, a board member provided further comment: *"I glance through them and read part of them, depending on my time. Sometimes too many articles on same issue."*
- Board member comments provided suggestions on better engaging members in the ranking process, improved performance measures, and additional review of conversion information.

Board Member Comments

The following table includes unedited board member comments submitted for this survey question series.

If you needed more background information, please tell us how we can improve. Were there particular issues for which you needed more information?
I find that my limited familiarity with the ranking process leads me to want to have more time to understand how projects were compared to each other.
Wondering if there is a way to engage board members meaningfully in approving project rankings. Perhaps this approval is more ceremonial, but if the board is approving the rankings, it would be nice to have a more meaningful interaction with the evaluation panels. Perhaps invite a representative or two from each panel to help present ranked list with staff and answer questions? There may be other ways to enhance this interaction....
Excellent presentations overall, however on the contested conversions, more lead time would be appreciated.
While the Director's report provides performance metrics/dashboard, it's not particularly meaningful to me as a Board member. The Board should develop its own set of metrics/dashboard regarding outcomes it wants to achieve- informed by the Strategic Plan, SCORP, Trails Plan, WWRC goals, equity of all acquisition and development investments, over-subscribed vs. under subscribed programs, etc. Conversions may need a subcommittee of the Board to review- depending upon complexity- to assure relevant information is obtained and analyzed. The Board needs to maintain a high bar in its evaluation and analysis of conversion requests.

Survey Results: Meeting Management



Notes

- Over half of board member respondents felt that meeting agendas provide enough or almost enough time for board discussion. One member responded the agendas do not provide enough time for discussion.
- Two board members responded that there is not enough opportunity for public comment.
- All board members responded that the order of the agendas generally makes sense.

Board Member Comments

The following table includes an unedited board member comment submitted for this survey question series.

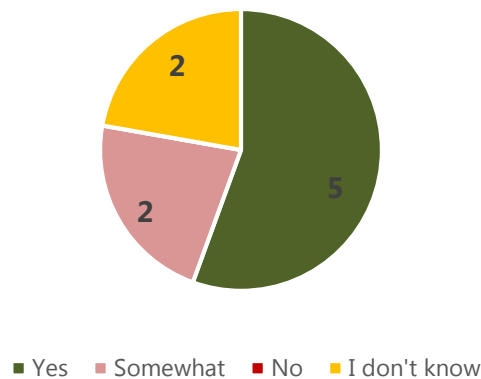
Does the order of agenda items generally make sense to you? In particular, do we have the right sequence of policy discussions and actions?

The Board agendas are heavily structured & ordered (good for getting thru business) and staff reports are well packaged to generally size up the matter before us. However, there's more to the care and feeding of the Board- enabling the Board flexibility and time on the agenda to more fully reflect and discuss particular items. The opportunity for greater engagement, consideration of alternate points of view and the like can lead to better decision making. We need to be cognizant of perceptions of "rubber stamping" or "rushing to judgment", while also avoiding "going down a rabbit hole" that has little value add to the matter at hand. Staff do an exceptional job in their research, staff memos and presentations- second to none! I appreciate their work, perspective and recommendation(s), but I believe the Board needs more time to consider some items (certainly not all) and engage in meaningful dialogue rather than "take what's served". This may mean not tackling as many agenda items, restructuring the agenda order, meeting more frequently, engaging in

subcommittee work more frequently, routine 2 day meetings, etc. In addition, I suggest that perhaps we consider a "study session" as part of our meetings- between 90 minutes to 3 hrs- to enable more focused discussion, policy work, analysis, etc., as needed on topics/issues of greatest interest of the Board... In addition, I would recommend 1 if not 2 full day retreats in a year to enable sufficient opportunity for reflection on our progress (bigger picture; alignment with our goals, plans, etc.).

Survey Results: Strategic Plan Linkages

Are the meeting topics clearly linked to the board's strategic plan?



Notes

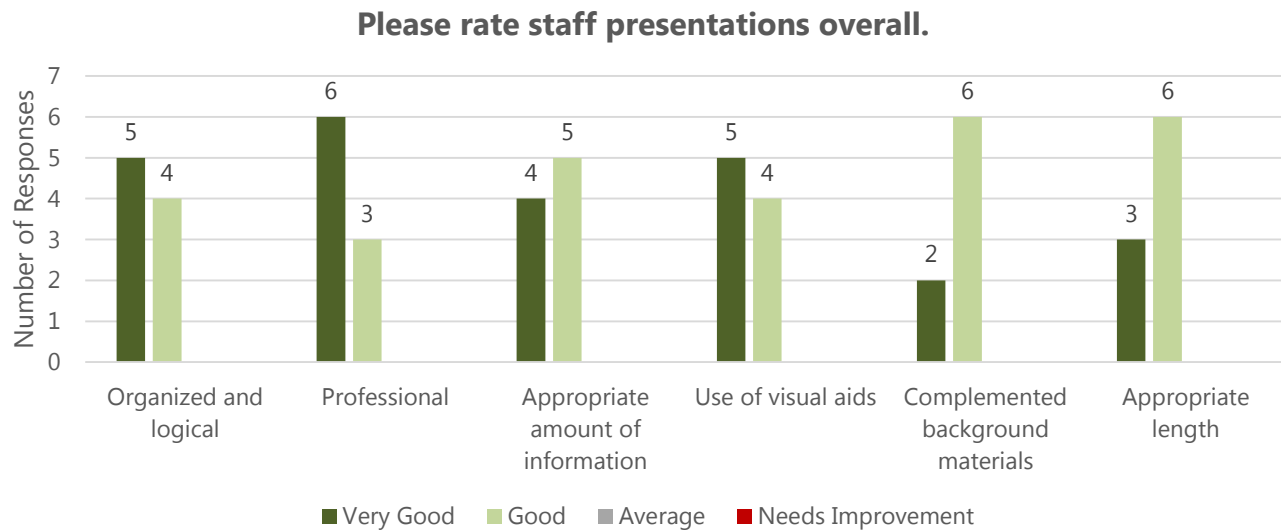
- A slight majority of board members felt that RCO staff link meeting topics clearly to the board's strategic plan. The remainder replied that topics were "somewhat" linked or that they were unsure.

Board Member Comments

The following table includes unedited board member comments submitted for this survey question.

Where or how could we improve the link between meeting topics and the strategic plan?
Showing the bigger picture... summary of our progress toward achieving our strategic plan goals, as well as those in the SCORP, Trails Plan, etc.
I'm understanding that public participation in meetings used to be greater. Would be interested in how we might encourage more public interaction. Perhaps consider having a few more meetings in Seattle, Spokane, or other population center?

Survey Results: Staff Presentations



Notes

- Board members generally gave high marks to staff presentations.
- One board member commented that it would be helpful to see better incorporation of maps.

Board Member Comments

The following table includes unedited board member comments submitted for this survey question.

Staff does an exceptional job with their presentations and staff reports.... I'd like to see data and information displayed geo-spatially- greater incorporation of maps- whether parcel, vicinity, regional and state.
Staff is excellent
Staff presentations are great. I like the distinction in board memos between providing direction and making decision.

Survey Results: Board Member Retreat Suggestions

Board Member Comments

The following table includes unedited board member comments submitted for this survey question.

At your last meeting the board discussed the idea of holding a one-day board planning session in April 2015. In your opinion, what would be the goal of the session? What would be the desired outcome(s)?
<p>1) How are we making the best use of grant funds toward achieving the Board's adopted plan priorities?</p> <p>2) How are we adjusting the grant programs (evaluation criteria; points; max awards; match requirements, etc.) to respond to changing use trends and/or achieve our plan goals?</p> <p>3) How much \$, acreage, geographic location, project sponsor type, land ownership, etc. have we invested in aquatic/water access (regardless of grant category), trails (regardless of grant category), wildlife habitat (regardless of grant category), active recreation (regardless of grant category), etc.? What's that "look like" (geospatially; rec benefit; etc.)</p> <p>4) Where are the gaps?</p> <p>5) How might we address the gaps?</p> <p>6) Where are there opportunities to better utilize existing public lands to meet our priorities/goals and what are the implications?</p>
<p>Discuss the use of the Board in steering and policy setting - Are we involved enough, etc. Some of the work feels like "rubber stamping"</p>
<p>Goal: To have a good understanding of our role as a policy board. Outcome: good understanding of the role staff plays in our being able to make the best decisions we can.</p>
<p>Goal: Creating an environment without the structure of a normal business meeting for the Board to brainstorm and reflect on the key policy issues associated with conservation and recreation in Washington. Desired outcomes:</p> <p>1) A better collective sense of the broader policy context and key policy topics that can be integrated more fully into the board's work.</p> <p>2) A draft set of recommendations for better measuring/capturing the value of the agency.</p>
<p>I need to give that a little more thought, but I'm interested in pursuing ways to enhance public involvement in board meetings.</p>
<p>My thoughts on the agenda for the upcoming Board Retreat are as follows: I would favor a focused, policy driven, result-oriented agenda. Many worthy discussion options have been suggested, but I would suggest that the Retreat discuss a limited number of policy issues in order that we can have a substantive discussion on the issues that the Board selects. The goal of the Retreat would be to make meaningful contributions by way of resolution or recommendations to the ongoing and prospective responsibilities of the Board and the RCO. As a predicate to the agenda, it would be appropriate for the Board to agree that any recommendations or resolutions must:</p> <p>1) Stay within the statutory authority of the RCFB and the RCO;</p> <p>2) Preserve the recognized high level of accountability, transparency and service that the RCO currently provides;</p>

3) Be within the fiscal and staff resources of the RCO and stakeholders alike.

As for specific agenda items, I would favor inclusion of the following:

1. Climate Change. The RCO should consider how to address the issue of climate change in grant applications. Just as the Board and the RCO developed a policy on sustainability, consideration should be given to the question of how grant applicants should factor into their applications the very real and imminent effects of climate change. The issue is near the top of the Governor's policy initiatives and the RCO should embrace that policy through innovations in the scoring of grant applications. It should be noted that this issue is also being addressed by the White House. Policy recommendations on climate change from the Governor's Office are anticipated for release early in 2015. Those recommendations should be thoroughly parsed by RCO staff and where appropriate, should be integrated into RCO operations and grant review guidelines. In the event that the recommendations result in the placement of new responsibilities in, or upon, the RCO, a separate Retreat or Board meeting should be scheduled to address that particular issue.
2. Long Term Planning. The Board and the RCO already have strategic plans (such as SCORP and NOVA) for many programs, but discussion should be had on how to address prospective issues at the grant application level such as climate change, population growth, transportation patterns, the newer uses of technology and social media, Internet "crowd funding" for grant matches, and the tension and disequilibria between rural and urban populations and resources. Although the resources of the RCO are many, bearing in mind #2 above, a thought is that the RCO would benefit from the services of outside experts who can provide additional scope and depth to the issue. One suggestion is that the Board consider recommending to the RCO that an outside consultant be retained on "Needs and Resource Assessment for Outdoor Recreation and Conservation" with a report due in a specific time period. Any such report should enhance, but not duplicate, current plans and data such as those found in the SCORP.
3. Economic Metrics. The RCO already does an excellent job in reporting how funds are distributed and allocated between grant applicants, and on how state programmatic funds are allocated. However, an element that is currently not being addressed is the economic impact of those funds, i.e. the number of jobs that are being created by specific grants. Rather than having grant applicants or stakeholders address this issue, the RCO could use criteria already accepted by either the federal or state government. This data would be separate from calculations done by industry trade groups, which are important in their own right, but which are not subject to the same fiduciary calculus as is the RCO. Any metrics adopted should also be consistent with those found in Results Washington.
4. Legislative Review. Time should be allocated for a review of information learned from the current legislative session.

The goal should be to re-acquaint ourselves with the Board's Strategic Plan, then plan out the next 2 years of meetings by needed topic areas.

To blow any dust off of the plan, see if we are on track and to see if things have changed in the environment enough to make tweaks in the plan.

Survey Results: What else should we know?

Board Member Comments

The following table includes unedited board member comments submitted for this survey question.

What else should we know? Are there other questions we should be asking on this survey?
Board member perceptions/views of its role/desired role. The Board has delegated many authorities to the agency's Director over the past 6 years- to enable greater speed and efficiency in decision making- may be good to revisit/affirm Board roles vs. staff roles.
I thoroughly enjoy my role as an alternate member and appreciate being included in board activities so I am able to fully participate in Don's absence. I hope this arrangement is working out satisfactorily for staff as well.
Is the board spending enough time discussing the legislative/political environment? If not, what can be done to make sure the board is up to speed with new leadership, committee members and other political dynamics.
Question 9. [News Clips] I glance through them and read part of them, depending on my time. Sometimes too many articles on same issue.